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SHU LEA CHEANG VIRUS BECOMING VIRUS EN DEVENIR

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SHU LEA CHEANG VIRUS BECOMING VIRUS EN DEVENIR

----- 2021

For her exhibition at the Departmental Museum of Asian Arts in Nice, Shu Lea Cheang showcases a new installation that is a prelude to UKI, her sci-fi viral alt-reality cinema in development for over ten years. Through it, Cheang imagines a cyber-bio-punk world where humanoids are made redundant and discarded by biotech industries as e-trash, but eventually re-emerge as a virus to reclaim their pleasure, autonomy, and agency.

CURATORIAL TEAM & WRITINGS

- Florent To Lay, based in Paris and Nice
- Banyu Huang, based in New York

EXHIBITION CONCEIVED & ORGANISED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ASSOCIATION OVNI OBJECTIF VIDÉO NICE.

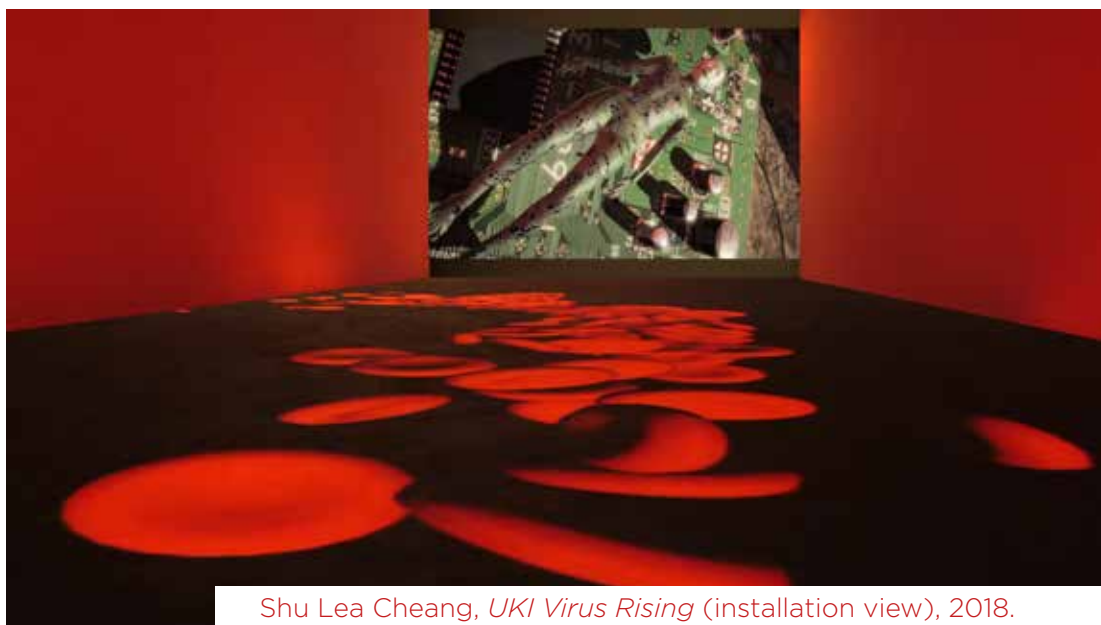
WITH THE SUPPORT of the Taiwanese Ministry of Culture, the Taiwan Cultural Center in Paris, the American Center for Arts and Culture in Paris, the Fresnoy - Studio National des Arts Contemporains, the Centre National du Cinéma D'CRÉAM/CNC, the Department of Alpes-Maritimes, the Windsor Hotel in Nice, and the association OVNi Objectif Vidéo Nice.

WITH THE SPONSORSHIP of BenQ for projection solutions for museography and Xiaomi for TV solutions.



Global health crises often reveal existing ingrained social frameworks and masked realities at play. Beyond social, economic, and political disruptions, they generate fears and anxieties toward what is considered unknown and alien. And it is the duality surrounding the virus that is the exploratory subject of Shu Lea Cheang's visionary body of work since the 2000s. As a source of contagion, the virus is not only associated with invasion, both literally and metaphorically, it is also inscribed with the potentiality to propagate, mobilize, and resist.

Shu Lea Cheang, *UKI Virus Rising* (installation view), 2018.
Three-channel color video installation, sound, 10 min.
Photo credit : Gwangju Biennale and Shu Lea Cheang.



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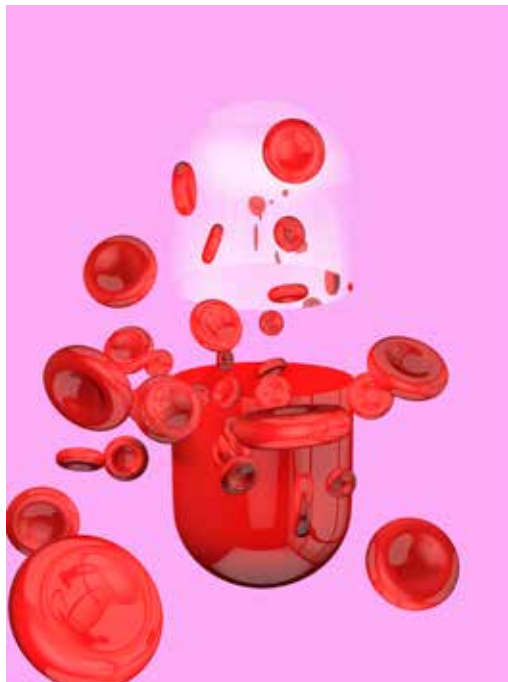


Shu Lea Cheang. Photo credit : © J. Jackie Baier

Creator of a boundary-crossing and multifaceted body of work, this major figure in contemporary art and pioneer in digital art represented Taiwan at the 2019 Venice Biennale with the installation *3x3x6* (2019), which was curated by Paul B. Preciado at Palazzo delle Prigioni. For Preciado, “Cheang does with Internet technologies what Pasolini did with film, and Kathy Acker with literature”.

Over the last forty years, Shu Lea Cheang’s approach has unwaveringly been at the intersection of all the major contemporary issues, with a particular attention to the internet, biotechnology, science fiction and all the possibilities that their crossovers allow; therefore exploring and deconstructing all the hegemonic mechanisms and power relations at work in our contemporary society: whether institutional, economic, social, geographical, scientific, technological, or related to class, gender, race, and sexuality - thereby revealing the impact of technology, which has been cornered by capitalist and corporate control, onto our relationship to the world and our own human body.





Shu Lea Cheang, *RED PILL - I hear the blood running*, 2021.
Image of the exhibition poster.
Photo credit : Shu Lea Cheang.

For her exhibition at the Departmental museum of asian arts in Nice, Shu Lea Cheang showcases a new installation that is a prelude to *UKI*, her sci-fi viral alt-reality cinema in development for over ten years.

Like a viral infestation that has overtaken the entire lower floor of the museum, this exhibition in orbit with her upcoming feature film *UKI* sets up an immersive universe through tongue-in-cheek commercials, *RED PILL: Your Pleasure Our Business* (2021) and *RED PILL: Bloody Red* (2021), a 3D-printed product display, *RED PILL* (2021), and cutting-edge bio-engineering research with the monumental video projection *PETRI DISH* (2021) and the immersive video display *UKI Virus Rising* (2018/21).



Shu Lea Cheang, *RED PILL* (model), 2021.
3D printed sculpture of a capsule, glass and plastique, 3D printed blood cells.
Photo credit : Shu Lea Cheang.

At the heart of this exhibition in Nice is a 3D sculpture named *RED PILL*(2021). It is an oral orgasmic pill for instant climax consumption. In Cheang's forthcoming film *UKI*, *RED PILL* originated from an era of post-net-crash, where biotech GENOM Co. sets out to conspire a profitable scheme: reprogram human orgasm into auto-generated, self-sustained pleasure that bypasses the need for human interaction. Working with pharmaceutical enterprises, GENOM Co. further harvests data transactions to produce *RED PILL* for mass markets.



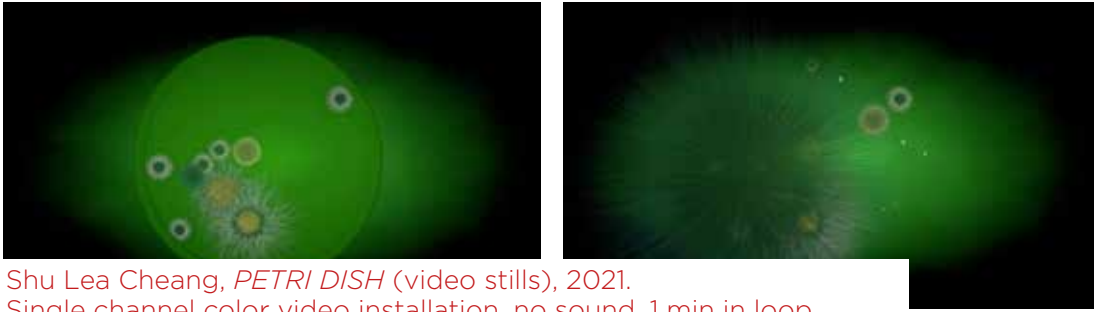
Shu Lea Cheang, *RED PILL: Your Pleasure Our Business* (video stills), 2021.
4K video, color, sound, 30 sec. Photo credit : Shu Lea Cheang.

The first ad spot, *RED PILL: Your Pleasure Our Business* (2021) illustrates the profitable bio-network (or BioNet) scheme of GENOM Co. Derived from the «no hand shake» rules during the current pandemic, GENOM Co. instigates hand shake as means of DNA data exchange, thus ever expanding BioNet. On the soundtrack, the dial up of a 64K modem from the last century signals a bio-network handshake has been accomplished.



Shu Lea Cheang, *RED PILL: Bloody Red* (video still), 2021.
4K video, color, no sound, 15 sec. Photo credit : Shu Lea Cheang.

The second ad spot *RED PILL: Bloody Red* (2021) showcases red blood cells slowly encapsulated in the RED PILL. Bloody red blood cells make up GENOM Co.'s BioNet scheme. BioNet controls human bodies thanks to these blood cells, which are re-engineered to alter human DNA composition.



Shu Lea Cheang, *PETRI DISH* (video stills), 2021.
Single channel color video installation, no sound, 1 min in loop.
Photo credit : Shu Lea Cheang.

The monumental video projection *PETRI DISH* (2021) presents cultures of bacteria in a Petri dish in the lab run by GENOM Co. The cultivated bacteria serves as infiltrating agent entering the red blood cells of human bodies, therefore re-engineering them to serve GENOM Co.'s BioNet scheme.



Shu Lea Cheang, *UKI Virus Rising* (installation shot), 2018.
Five-channel color video installation, sound, 10 min in loop.
Photo credit : Gwangju Biennale et Shu Lea Cheang.

Eventually, *UKI Virus Rising* (2018/21) unveils the beginning of a story. Shown here is an etrashville with ever-morphing roaming virus. In this narrative, a humanoid formerly owned by GENOM Co. was dumped here, and now strives to reboot their hard-drive body system. Inadvertently, their frenzied self-coding launches themselves into UKI retrovirus, ready to replicate and infiltrate the BioNet of GENOM Co. Here the story begins with UKI virus rising.



Crédits: Marlène Poppi

The Departmental museum of asian arts is run by the Département des Alpes-Maritimes. In 1987, the Département commissioned the renowned Japanese architect Kenzo Tange to design a museum devoted to the knowledge of world art and culture, inaugurated in October 1998. Located on an exceptional site, built on an artificial lake, inside a seven-hectare floral park, along the famous Promenade des Anglais, opposite Nice Côte d'Azur airport and in the heart of the Arénas business center, this white marble masterpiece creates a real bridge between the cultures and sensibilities of the European and Asian continents. The museum is aimed at a large audience and confronts them with high-quality pieces, which are characteristic of the aforementioned cultures. The great originality of the concept, closer to a Far Eastern than a Western one, lies in a desire to

rely on old collections, serving as historical and aesthetic references, to express the durability of traditions even in the most modern creations. Styling and design, furniture and daily-use objects, as well as remarkable ethnic pieces, testify to the diversity of Asian cultures and the quality of a know-how safeguarded, most often, by uninterrupted practice.

As for the museography designed by the architect François Deslaugiers, it goes in the direction of a total enhancement of the object by glass supports likely to disappear, not to create a distortion for the eye with the key building materials, marble, metal and glass, and refined lighting, making each room a unique work, magically appearing in the light.

The tour begins on the ground floor with four cube-shaped rooms dedicated to the two mother civilizations of Asia, China and India, then Japan and Southeast Asia. On the first floor, the rotunda, crowned with a glass pyramid, is reserved for Buddhism, a unifying element of the Asian world and regularly hosts contemporary art exhibitions. In the basement, the visit continues with the temporary exhibition and on the ground floor, with the tea pavilion, a Japanese architectural space dedicated to tea ceremonies. Based on the ancient and contemporary references made up by the museum's collection, the temporary exhibitions also combine tradition and modernity, court arts and folk or tribal art, as well as contemporary creations opening onto the 21st century.

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The Departmental museum of asian arts is open every day, except on Tuesday.
September 1 to June 30, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
and July 1 to August 31, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

